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SUBJECT: EU CHARACTERIZES GVN HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE AS A "MAJOR
DISAPPOINTMENT"

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REFS:

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) In a meeting with Embassy PolOffs, Hanoi-based EU diplomats lamented that its semi-annual human rights dialogue with the GVN, held on June 28 in Hanoi, was "extremely disappointing" and "superficial." Only Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officers composed the GVN delegation, which the EU described as largely unprepared and detached. A detailed EU presentation of its 57-person list of those imprisoned, detained or missing, which focused on female persons of concern, largely fell on deaf ears. EU representatives expressed concern that the GVN has a much different perception of what freedom means and does not seem fazed by arguments based on international law. The European Parliament is reportedly drafting a human rights resolution on Vietnam. End Summary.

GERMAN AMBASSADOR LEADS EU DELEGATION

¶2. (SBU) On June 29, PolOffs met with Hanoi-based members of the EU's delegation to the semi-annual EU-GVN Human Rights Dialogue, which took place in Hanoi on June 28. German Ambassador to Vietnam Christian-Ludwig Weber-Lortsch led the delegation, which was composed of diplomats from several EU member missions in Hanoi. (Note: Typically, the mid-year EU-Vietnam dialogue is attended only by Hanoi-based EU diplomats; the end-of-year dialogue includes representatives from Brussels and elsewhere. End Note.) The GVN delegation was composed of 17 members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and led by Le Hoai Trung, the Director General of the MFA Department of International Organizations, which has responsibility for human rights within the MFA. The agenda for this year's dialogue focused on two primary areas, Freedom of Expression and Persons of Concern.

GVN DELEGATION "UNPREPARED" AND UNCONCERNED

¶3. (SBU) EU representatives described this year's dialogue as "extremely disappointing" and "superficial." The GVN delegation was "unprepared" and "not taking it seriously," although our colleagues noted positively that this year's GVN delegation was "much less aggressive" than in previous sessions. The EU representatives also expressed great disappointment at learning a week before the dialogue that the GVN would only be represented by the MFA, as they had also requested additional participation, at a minimum, by

representatives of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). In sum, the EU representatives told us that they were not able to make much progress in discussions because the GVN simply "has a much different perception of freedom than we do." They also remarked that a few times during the talks, it seemed at times like members of the GVN delegation were "laughing at us."

EU SUBMITS LIST OF 57 PERSONS OF CONCERN; FOCUSES ON WOMEN

14. (SBU) On the issue of persons of concern, the EU delegation presented a list to the GVN of 57 individuals, including those in jail, missing or under house arrest. It centered its discussion on currently detained and jailed female political activists, including human rights lawyer Le Thi Cong Nhan, journalist Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, lawyer and democracy activist Bui Kim Thanh and Tran Thi Thuy Tran (a lawyer associate of recently released NED fellow Le Quoc Quan). The GVN's response was that the GVN is focused on stability and that these individuals are all "lawbreakers." Some of our EU counterparts expressed the opinion and concern to us that drawing attention to individual cases of political prisoners could actually hurt the individual's chance for an early release or, at least, give the GVN another bargaining chip in future negotiations.

15. (SBU) Responding to the EU's presentation, the GVN representatives said that Vietnam remains "very engaged" on human rights issues, which the EU representatives explained to us was the GVN's perennial "excuse" to ensure its continued stream of international donor benefits. The GVN also cited an increased number of petitions and complaints from the public regarding public services; according to the GVN delegation members, this is a demonstration of greater civic participation and "democracy" in the running of the country, our EU colleagues said.

GVN NOT FAZED BY INTERNATIONAL LAW ARGUMENT

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16. (SBU) On the agenda item of freedom of expression, the EU representatives focused their discussion on the lack of freedom of the press in Vietnam and the limitations on and persecution of journalists. They cited rights guaranteed under Vietnam's constitution and its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Here, the GVN representatives merely recited the number of journalists who have permits to work and disagreed with the premise that journalists are in any way restricted.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT REPORTEDLY DRAFTING RESOLUTION

17. (SBU) Finally, the EU representatives noted to PolOffs that the European Parliament is currently preparing a draft resolution on the human rights situation in Vietnam.

MARINE